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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KIRF](#) [KISL](#) [SP](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS: AMBASSADOR RICE MEETS
WITH TURKISH AND SPANISH PERMREPS

REF: A. USUN 638
[1](#)B. 2008 STATE 42613
[1](#)C. 2008 STATE 62006
[1](#)D. 2008 USUN 814

Classified By: Ambassador Susan Rice, for reasons 1.4(b)(d)

- [1](#)1. This is an action cable. See paragraph 6 below.
- [1](#)2. (SBU) Turkish PermRep Ilkin and Spanish PermRep Yanez-Barnuevo requested a meeting with Ambassador Rice to urge U.S. backing for the Alliance of Civilizations (AOC). They explained that the initiative for the AOC came from their governments in 2005, is was aimed at fostering inter-cultural dialogue and addressing misunderstandings in an international fora, and has been endorsed by SYGs Annan and Ban. Turkey and Spain would like to have both Israel and the U.S. fully on board, to enhance the credibility of the AOC. They appreciate the U.S. sending observers to last week's meeting (ref a) of Friends of the AOC, and noted that the Israeli ambassador to Turkey attended the Istanbul Forum. They acknowledged the difficulties that Israel and the U.S. had with the November 2006 Report of the High-Level Group of Experts recommendation to develop a "White Paper" on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. (Note: U.S. and Jewish experts were included in the 20-member expert group, namely Rabbi Arthur Schneier of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation and UN East Park Synagogue, and Professor John Esposito of Georgetown University. Passages in the portion of the report dealing with the history of relations between Western and Muslim societies, as well as the recommendation to produce the above-mentioned "White Paper" were considered problematic by the Department and some members of Congress. The entire text of the High-Level Group's report can be found on the AOC website: www.unaoc.org. End note.)
- [1](#)3. (C) Ambassador Ilkin underlined that the high-level panel was not a part of the AOC, that the recommendation on a White Paper had been sidelined and would not be acted upon, and that the governments of Turkey and Spain would never allow the AOC to become an Israel-bashing platform. Ambassador Yanez-Barnuevo noted that former Portuguese President Jorge Sampaio, the Secretary-General's High Representative for the AOC, had visited Israel, and would have visited NY and Washington last week had he not fallen ill. In response to Ambassador Rice's question about the membership of nations with an anti-Israel bias, they acknowledged that Iran, Syria and Libya were all members of the AOC, but that the two co-sponsors, Turkey and Spain, along with High Representative

Sampaio and the Secretary-General controlled the agenda of the AOC. They further stressed that the annual AOC Forum did not result in any agreed outcome document, but only in a report by the High Representative to the SYG. They described the AOC as a UN initiative similar in nature to the Global Compact and the Democracy Fund, i.e., having the imprimature of the UN, but avoiding the oversight of its activities by the GA.

¶4. (SBU) Ambassador Rice asked what obligations the U.S. would be expected to undertake if it were to become a member of the AOC. The PermReps assured her that all the activities of the AOC were voluntary, that funding was also voluntary and came mainly from Spain and Turkey, and that no outcome document was adopted in the annual Forum. They noted that many civil society organizations, foundations and academics take part in the Forum, as well as international organizations and governments. The AOC members undertake programs in four areas: migration, youth, education and the media. (Note: EUR A/S Volker in April 2008 announced to the Spanish and Turkish governments (ref b) that a public affairs program, the Department of State's Citizen Dialogue Program, which sent American Muslims overseas on speaking tours, could be considered to "further the objectives of the AOC", after repeated pleas from the Spanish government to find a means of linking the U.S. to the AOC.)

¶5. (U) The PermReps ended the meeting by asking the U.S. to attend the September ministerial-level breakfast meeting in New York of the Group of Friends of the AOC, underscoring the important boost that would be given towards the target of creating more understanding in the world if the U.S. placed

its weight behind the AOC.

¶6. (C) In a private pull aside after the meeting, the Spanish PR indicated to Amb. Rice upon instructions from Madrid the crucial importance that Spain places on being included in the G-20 meeting in Pittsburgh. He called it a critical issue in the bilateral relationship.

¶7. (U) ACTION REQUEST: Mission requests an update on the results of the Department's ongoing review of its position regarding membership in the Alliance of Civilizations.

RICE